

Wood, H. (1999). *Displacing  
Natives*. Lanham: Rowman  
& Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

## Chapter Two

### Captain James Cook, Rhetorician

Apotheosis it was. Making Cook a God it was. But it was Europeans who made  
Cook a God, not the Hawaiians.

Herb Kawainui Kane<sup>1</sup>

Seldom has any book published in any country at any time created more excitement than did *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, which appeared in print in London four years after Captain James Cook's two ships *Discovery* and *Resolution* returned home.<sup>2</sup> The initial, four-volume edition of two thousand copies sold out in three days, and second and third editions swiftly followed. Pirated editions were soon generally available, and a French translation in 1785 excited Parisian readers. Public forums and newspapers could not seem to satisfy the demand for opportunities to discuss the volumes. Plays loosely based on the reported events filled London theaters.

The eighteenth-century excitement was so great that historians in our own century remain affected by the hyperbolic prose that was associated with these events. So, for example, Anthony Murray-Oliver gushes about these 1784 volumes that through them the "whole civilized world thrilled to the vicarious voyaging so many took with Cook."<sup>3</sup> O. A. Bushnell's recent account is only slightly less effusive: "Once again, as after his first two voyages, in an effusion of Polynesian-mania, London's versifiers, playwrights, composers, and dancing masters, drawing more upon fancy than upon knowledge, produced a spate of epics, odes, and elegies, gaudy pantomimes, dramatic spectacles, and grand ballets, in which the brave deeds and gory murder of Captain Cook were the dominant themes."<sup>4</sup>

It was already well known in England and Europe prior to the volumes' publication that Cook had been killed by the so-called Indians of Hawai'i. Cook's official artist, John Webber, had issued his watercolor of Cook's death as a mass-produced engraving in 1782. This image, as David W. Forbes points out, extensively "mythologized what actually occurred."<sup>5</sup> Though he had not witnessed the stabbing, Webber continued in this watercolor the careful practice

shown in his other images; Forbes explains he depicted “Cook as the embodiment of the enlightened eighteenth-century explorer in his ceremonial progress through the Pacific” (18–19). Webber’s *The Death of Cook* (see Figure 2.1) focuses on a Cook dressed in white and not in the canvas he actually wore. He stands on a beach, although there was no beach at Ka‘awaloa. Webber’s martyr offers his vulnerable back to a mob of fierce, armed Hawaiians. He raises a naked hand in an effort to order his own men to cease firing. As Forbes concludes, Webber thus skillfully represents Cook “as a victim of his own humanity” (54).<sup>6</sup>

Webber’s engraving, released two years before the official volumes appeared, helped make those few sections of the volumes that described Hawai‘i of particular interest. Authorship of the first two volumes was ascribed to Cook, and the third volume detailing Cook’s death and the subsequent return home of the two ships was offered as the writing of James King, who took command of the *Discovery* after Cook’s second in command, Charles Clerke, also died.

Though now more than two hundred years old, Webber’s many images remain among the most influential representations of Hawai‘i ever produced. The folio volume, titled *An Atlas of Illustrations*, contained the still often-reprinted plates that were based mostly on Webber’s watercolors and drawings. (Webber’s already famous *The Death of Cook* was not offered as part of this volume. Forbes speculates that the Admiralty might have decided that the plate would detract from the impact of the others depicting Cook as the master of his domain.) In *European*

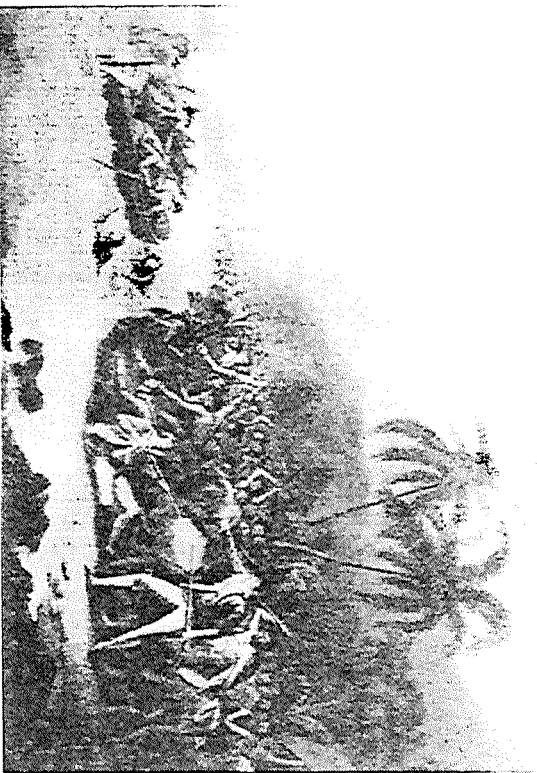


Figure 2.1 *The Death of Captain Cook* by John Webber

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*Vision and the South Pacific*, the pioneering and still standard work on this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art, Bernard Smith argues that Webber’s work became “the chief source for illustrations concerning the Pacific in all kinds of publications—travel books, geography texts, missionary tracts, and articles on the Pacific in journals, newspapers, encyclopedias of costume and exotic wallpapers.”<sup>7</sup> While Smith focuses on Webber’s overwhelming impact in earlier centuries, art historian Forbes surveys the twentieth century and maintains that the 1784 Webber-inspired plates “so effectively fixed in the minds of the world the image of the Hawaiian islands at the period of first contact with the West that popular knowledge of Hawaiian culture is still largely dependent on his drawings and watercolors and the engravings made from them” (7). It is only in several of Webber’s drawings, for example, that it is possible to view examples of the Kanaka Maoli helmet that has become such a prominent icon in contemporary Hawai‘i. Webber’s representations associate this helmet with Lono, a god of the season of peace, but most modern reproductions on T-shirts and hanging from the mirrors of cars link the helmet with warriors.<sup>8</sup>

Forbes probably overestimates Webber’s influence, but it does seem clear that Cook and King’s 1784 text as well as Webber’s illustrations continue to impact contemporary perceptions of Hawai‘i. It may be useful then, and not merely for historical reasons, to interrogate the assumptions upon which these first representations of the islands were built.

In a search for titillation, many early readers probably skipped directly to King’s pages describing Cook’s demise. Interest in Cook’s death was so great that numerous artists and playwrights produced multiple versions of the event. Fascination with it has remained so strong that at the close of the twentieth century one still finds new accounts appearing. Most prominent of late has been a quarrel between the anthropologists Gananeth Obeyesekere and Marshall Sahlins over what Hawaiians were thinking as they killed Cook.<sup>9</sup> That Cook, a foreigner, remains the focus of this dispute among scholars supposedly interested in Hawaiians illustrates how narcissistic Euroamerican scholarship remains. One cannot imagine these metropolitan scholars becoming as exercised over the still unresolved issue of what Kamehameha was thinking as Keōua was killed at the dedication of Pu‘u Kohola Heia near Kawaihae in 1791. Yet the consequences of this event were far more consequential for the people then living in Hawai‘i than the death of an English captain.<sup>10</sup>

Though hundreds of Euroamerican scholars and many thousands of pages have examined Cook’s death, there has been no Euroamerican interest in any century in the Hawaiian man that Cook murdered shortly before he himself was killed.<sup>11</sup> There has been, likewise, next to no writing or discussion even in contemporary Hawai‘i about the dozens of unarmed women, children, and men that were slaughtered and dismembered by the English in the twenty-four hours after Cook died.

This disproportionate interest in Euroamerican subjects and subjectivities is a constant in the two hundred-year tradition of Euroamerican representations of

Hawai'i. It is a reminder of why it is useful to view foreign representations of Hawai'i like the comparable early cultural productions of the Americas: productions Stephen Greenblatt describes as "representations that are relational, local and historically contingent. Their overriding interest is not knowledge of the other but practice upon the other."<sup>12</sup>

### FASHIONING RATIONALITY

It is not only through their obsessive self-absorption that Euroamerican representations expose their inadequacy. The very practice of composing descriptions of the other is best understood not as a method of knowledge production but as a method of fashioning a particular, historically situated "self." Cook, for example, used several rhetorical techniques in what Paul Carter calls his "explorer's discourse."<sup>13</sup> Carter focuses on a single technique, on the ways that Cook's naming practices created a geographical space into which later explorers, merchants, and settlers could venture with confidence. Carter points out that Cook's very first act of naming in the Pacific produced an island called "New Island" because, Cook explained in his 1780, "it is not laid down in any chart."<sup>14</sup> Such a name emphasizes its "firstness" for Cook and Anglo-Europeans and ignores any qualities of the island itself. As Carter observes, "It is a name that refuses to admit the place was there before it was named, a name that celebrates the travelling mode of knowledge" (9). Cook's hundreds of Pacific namings, along with the explanations he offered in journal and log, helped transform the Pacific for Euroamericans from a vast empty space into a place with history defined by its relationship to England. The central players in that history were not the peoples who had inhabited it for millennia, but rather the newly arrived Englishmen and, particularly, Cook himself. Giving names with Anglo-European theories attached asserted both Cook's own and later Euroamericans' rights to return, to continue the personal and nationalistic narrative Cook began.

Placing these newly bestowed names in the then-still-experimental grid of longitudes and latitudes constituted yet another rhetorical technique to assist in taking possession. The anchor of all Cook's mapping, the prime meridian, refers his discoveries back to England, to Greenwich. Other European navigators would for many decades to come fix this arbitrary point in their own countries, but all, like Cook, anchored their grids in a Eurocentrism that, as R. Douglas Herman points out, encouraged a fetishizing of mathematics while de-emphasizing intimacy with particular Pacific places. Longitudes and latitudes allowed explorers like Cook to write continents and thousand-mile-long archipelagos into their geographic grids without having to step off their boats, without having to meet or learn one thing from the native peoples who had thousands of years of histories and names for these places.<sup>15</sup> Cook arranged his journal entries by date, and this sequencing operates as another powerful rhetorical device within his explorer's discourse. For example, under the heading "January 19" in the portion of the journal describing events of

1778, Cook writes of his unanticipated sighting of Hawai'i: "At this time we were in some doubt whether or no the land before [us]<sup>16</sup> was inhabited, this doubt was soon cleared up, by seeing some Canoes coming off from the shore towards the Ships."<sup>17</sup> Cook's use of dates as an organizing principle encourages readers to feel as if they are experiencing Cook's travels in linear time, presumably just as he experienced them. This January 19 entry places readers inside Cook's head as he wonders about the possibility that there are inhabitants of this newly discovered land. Readers then seem to watch him as time unfolds and "this doubt" is "cleared up" in the sighting of canoes. A sense of immediacy for readers of the journals is amplified by Cook's tendency to write nearly daily entries and to include within them such copious and minor details, often of interest only to future Pacific sea captains, that readers are encouraged to assume they are being provided with a thorough record of everything important Cook thought and saw.

These senses of immediacy, of daliness, and of completeness are, in fact, artifacts of Cook's considerable rhetorical art. The journal entries are indeed arranged by dates, but the journal was not in fact written daily. Instead, Cook's biographer J.C. Beaglehole concludes, Cook made notes, then drafts, borrowed from the writing of various others, then carefully crafted further revisions before finally inscribing his journal with prose he knew would be read by others.

Cook's notes and drafts for his third voyage have not survived but, as Beaglehole details in his lecture *Cook the Writer*, the manuscripts remaining from Cook's previous voyages into the Pacific make the impressive progress of Cook's apprenticeship as a writer very clear. On his first voyage, Cook had kept a log "with details of the winds and the ship's behaviour and management," as well as a separate column of events deemed worthy of remark.<sup>18</sup> These compositions were awkward, leaving little doubt Cook "was not a natural-born writer" (6). Cook's log was later expanded into a rough written journal; upon Cook's return, this text and the journals of several others on the voyage were given to John Hawkesworth, who was charged with turning the crude prose of seamen into volumes fit for polite society.

On his second voyage, Beaglehole shows, Cook began shaping his log and his journal differently, with more self-consciousness—aware as he had not been on the first voyage that his shipboard writing would likely later become the basis for a book. Cook wrote and revised much more on the second than he had on the first voyage, as Beaglehole summarizes, "drafting and redrafting, expanding, abbreviating and recasting, correction, substitution, interlineation, a million words or so" (12). Some of these manuscripts were turned over to John Douglas, Canon of Windsor, who further revised, added and edited them into a book. Douglas was still revising the proofs for this manuscript to be published under Cook's name as Cook left England on his third voyage. And so, Beaglehole argues, Cook's method of composition on his final voyage was shaped even more by Cook's determination to return with a final draft that would leave Douglas with little to complain about or change. Cook, no longer content simply to be an explorer, aimed to prove himself to be an author and a gentleman as well. He now under-

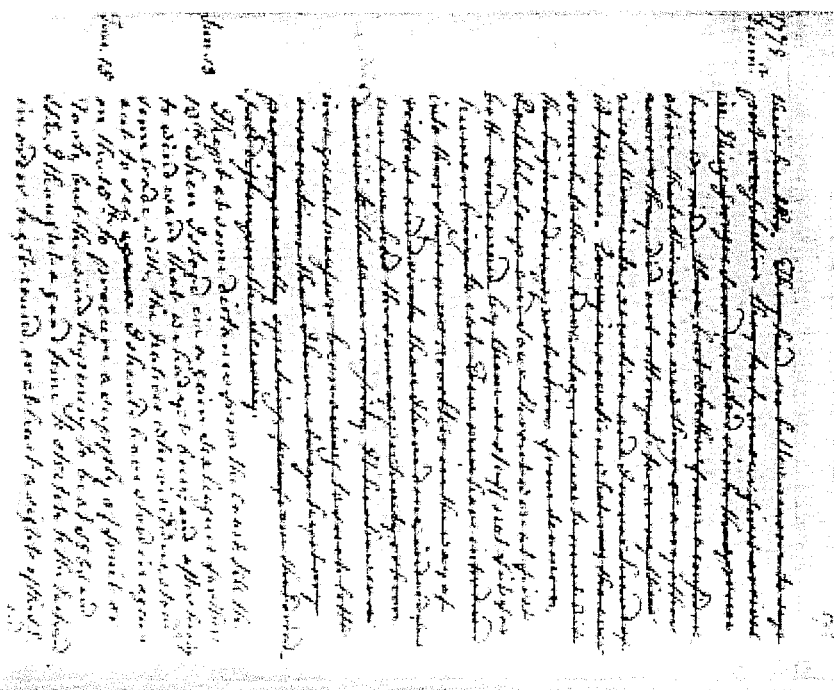
stood how his future reputation would be based not so much on what he did on his voyages as on what he and others had written about them. The result, in Beaglehole's words, was "a far cry indeed from the journal of his first voyage to this sophisticated document."<sup>19</sup> Cook's entries representing Hawai'i, then, are no more spontaneous descriptions or casual diary entries than were such other eighteenth-century prose observations as Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* or Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, each written about the same time.

Cook's composition apprenticeship included studying and copying into his own journal the writings of others on his voyages. He borrowed from his subordinates—Joseph Banks in his first voyage, William Wales on his second, and from William Anderson on his third. Each of these men had had more formal education and practice in writing polite prose. From each, Beaglehole maintains, Cook learned tricks of the writer's craft as he copied lengthy passages from their writings into his journal.

In addition to this work of imitation, we know Cook gradually learned how to make extensive, "improving" revisions. The length of time Cook took refining his prose on his final voyage seems to have been at least as long as a month, for the last entry in his journal is dated January 17, 1779, four weeks before he died. (Beaglehole observes that the probable multiple versions of notes and revisions Cook had collected preparatory to making these entries seem to have been lost soon after his two ships returned to England.) The surviving drafts reveal Cook scrupulously shaped his compositions by omitting or, in later drafts, removing, most references to his personal thoughts and feelings. As Beaglehole concludes, "Only very rarely did Cook's irritations seep through to his journals" (ciii). Cook's drafts (see Figure 2.2 for a sample) instead show that he fashioned himself to be a creature without desires, pains, hungers and prejudices, as a kind of objective recording machine, as the kind of man that the new Anglo-European science was starting to claim produced universal knowledge.

Beaglehole concludes that Cook probably had planned to revise substantially his entire journal one final time on the long, usually uneventful sail home (clxxiv). Death interrupted this plan, but the draft did receive radical revising by Douglas before publication of the 1784 volumes that took Europe by such a storm. Douglas relied much on Anderson's journal, often printing long passages from Anderson as Cook's own. Douglas further added whatever details he thought felicitous or appropriate for Cook's image. Sometimes, as Beaglehole points out, it seems Douglas used Cook's original text as "merely a springboard" (cc). It was Douglas and not Cook or Anderson, for example, who composed what has often been referred to as Cook's final entry before his death, the claim that the discovery of the Sandwich Islands "seemed, in many respects, to be the most important that had hitherto been made by Europeans, throughout the extent of the Pacific Ocean."<sup>20</sup> It was Douglas, as well, who composed most of the passage attributed to Cook I quoted above offering praise of Anderson and Webber. In his journal Cook had written simply: "I left the command to Mr. Williamson who was with me and took a walk up the Valley, accompanied by Dr. Anderson and Mr.

Figure 2.2 A page from Cook's journal

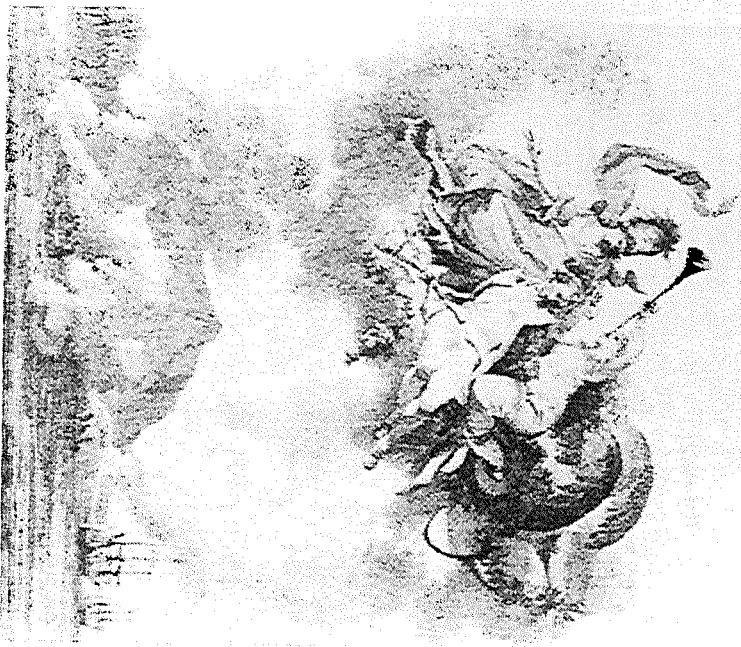


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Webber; conducted by one of the Natives and attended by a tolerable train."<sup>21</sup> Douglas revises "walk" to "excursion," expands "up the Valley" to "into the country, up the valley," and attributes to Cook entirely from Douglas's imagination the claim that Anderson and Webber were "well-qualified" with pen and pencil to represent every thing "worthy of observation." Since Cook could not protest, Beaglehole speculates, Douglas felt free to change as much as he wished.

Still, Douglas's revisions share Cook's own general aim to fashion the journals into a trustworthy, gentleman-explorer's discourse. Both writers labored to ensure that the resulting volumes pleased their sponsors in the Admiralty, enticed book buyers, and constructed Cook as a judicious, rational, and heroic man. In each of these aims, the 1784 volumes and the many supporting images (see Figure 2.3) succeeded so spectacularly that now, even at the end of the twentieth century, Cook remains a hero to many throughout the world.

Figure 2.3 *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook from a design of P. J. De L'outherbourg, 1794*



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### REFASHIONING COOK

A fundamentally different, unheroic representation of Cook appears, however, in the journals and logs composed by those who accompanied Cook on his final voyage. At least thirty of the one hundred eighty men on the two ships on Cook's last voyage at one time or another were busy scribbling in their own logs or journals in apparent hopes of one day cashing in on the notoriety that Cook had won during his first two trips to the Pacific.<sup>22</sup> Some of these texts (William Anderson's, for example) seem to have been as carefully crafted as were Cook's. Most, however, were likely written only once and left unrevised. In composite, these disparate texts depict Cook not as a dispassionate machine producing universal knowledge but rather as a man growing increasingly irrational, unreliable, and violent as a long, frustrating journey stretches on and on.

For example, though Cook's journal makes a pretense of offering an extensive, daily and complete account of his stay in Tonga, Cook's journal and, of course,

Douglas's revised version omit to mention what some others do: how, for petty thievery, Cook ordered one Tongan's ear cut off, another's arm to be mangled, and yet others to be whipped with several dozens of lashes—though, according to British admiralty rules, only twelve lashes per day were legal for seamen. Midshipman George Gilbert wrote about these incidents in his journal:

Capt. Cook punished in a manner rather unbecoming of a European viz: by cutting off their ears; firing at them with small shot, or ball, as they were swimming or paddling to the shore and suffering the people [ship's crew] . . . to beat them with the oars, and stick the boat hook into them where ever they could hit them; one in particular he punished by ordering one of our people to make two cuts upon his arm to the bone once across [sic] the other close below his shoulder.<sup>23</sup>

About these events in his revised journal, Cook reported only that "as the crowd was always so great I would not allow the sentries to fire lest the innocent should suffer for the guilty" (132). After days and perhaps weeks of drafting and revising, Cook chose here to lie about what he ordered the sentries to do because, we can surmise, he wished to fashion his image in his journals as a man who acted judiciously.

Weeks later, Cook wrote about events on the island of Moorea that he had twice "sent the Carpenters to break up three or four Canoes" (231) of the Natives as punishment for stealing one goat from him. Alternative accounts by three other witnesses illustrate again how carefully Cook revised his journal to shape his image. William Harvey, the master's mate, wrote in his log that Captain Cook had not simply broken a few canoes but had destroyed the Chief's house and his canoes, "then march'd along shore burning all the Houses and Canoes they met with till they arrived at the Place where the boats lay to take them in, they burnt in all 20 houses and 18 large War Canoes some of which row'd 100 to 200 paddles" (231–232).<sup>24</sup>

Murder was the first notable act of Cook's men after their "discovery" of Kāua'i. The people of Kāua'i seem to have been curious about these strange new men and ships, likely the first of their type that they had ever seen. As William Bayly, the ship's astronomer and an eyewitness to the killing, wrote in his log, it did not seem that the group of Hawaiians that Cook's men attacked "had any ill intention, but rather the contrary. They being over eager to Assist us, in landing thro' the surf" (267n). Nonetheless, John Williamson, the *Resolution's* third lieutenant, aimed and fired his gun. Cook once again revised his journal to repress any suggestion that he lacked rational control, reporting that Williamson "was obliged to fire, by which one man was killed" (267). Cook's careful choice of "was obliged" turns Williamson's active murder into a passive, suggesting Williamson was forced to kill a man whose only mistake was being "over eager to Assist."<sup>25</sup>

On February 14, 1779, before dawn, Cook once more prepared his men and himself to attack unarmed and friendly Natives. Aboard their ship anchored in

Kealakekua Bay, Cook ordered nine marines to load their muskets with ball rather than with small shot. Shot, at worst, inflicted horrible abrasions, painful and difficult to heal in the humid tropics. Ball, however, as Cook and his men knew, was usually lethal. Cook led his band in a raid on the settlement ashore, though the people there had made it clear to Cook they no longer welcomed such visits. Cook kidnapped for ransom Kalani ʻōpu'u, a chief who had earlier shown Cook much kindness. Cook was about to load Kalani ʻōpu'u into a boat to take him away when the Hawaiians standing nearby received news that elsewhere a separate gang of Cook's had murdered Kalimu, another Hawaiian chief. The bystanders, anxious for the safety of Kalani ʻōpu'u, began to insist that Cook release him. Cook refused and fired a shot at close range at one Hawaiian, who was not much injured because of the thick mats he wore about his chest. Soon after, as Beaglehole tells the tale, "Cook fired his other barrel, loaded with ball, and killed a man."<sup>26</sup>

Pacific scholars have little discussed Cook's murderous act yet they have lavished attention for two hundred years on the fact that, soon after shooting this man, Cook himself was killed. The first official version appeared before the Anglo-European public in the supposed words of Captain James King, in the third volume of the 1784 book that created such a sensation throughout Europe. King's version of Cook's death, like the hundreds that followed and that continue to appear, omits even an allusion to the massacre that Cook's crew inflicted on the Hawaiians to memorialize their Captain's death. At least five chiefs were immediately killed in retaliation, as well as about twenty-five other Kanaka Maoli. John Law, the ship's surgeon whom Beaglehole describes as a "fair, able and humane mind" (cxc), witnessed the events and wrote, "Natives who stayed in their Houses were run thro' by Bayonets & some poor People Making their Escape were Shot" (562). Afterwards, Law continues, "when they had Murdered these Defenceless people they severed the heads and stuck them on the boats as Trophies" (563). Such behavior, of course, undermines the image of Cook that he and his sponsors wished to disseminate throughout the Anglo-European world. This trophy killing and marauding has been similarly absent from the many representations of Cook and of his work that by 1975 had led, by Anthony Murray-Oliver's count, to the erection of more than two hundred statues and memorials to Cook around the earth, "so widespread and lasting is the world's admiration of the great man."<sup>27</sup>

Beaglehole, a great admirer of Cook, was apprehensive that his twentieth-century publication of the various contemporary collateral logs and journals would subvert the gentleman-sailor image that Cook and Douglas first constructed, an image that Beaglehole himself had made a career out of buttressing. ("He was the genius of the matter of fact," Beaglehole proclaims toward the end of Cook's journal [698].) Beaglehole even inserted a two hundred-page apologia as his "Introduction" to the third volume of the journals in an attempt to establish a preemptive explanation for the troubling images the writing of Cook's companions presents. Beaglehole argues his "thesis," as he calls it, that Cook started the

third voyage "already a tired man."<sup>28</sup> Cook had not sufficiently recovered from his first two voyages. Beaglehole maintains, and was in poor mental health. This caused the usually rational Captain to make mistakes, at Tonga, Moorea, and Kealakekua Bay, places where Beaglehole argues we can see Cook acting "completely out of character" (cxi) and/or experiencing a "temporary displacement of character" (cliv). Here is a sample of how Beaglehole elaborates this defense:

the inner tensions of an able mind were set up, and exacerbated. We have a man tired . . . with that almost imperceptible blunting of the rain that makes him, under a light searching enough, a perceptibly rather different man. His apprehensions as a discoverer were not so constantly fine as they had been; his understanding of other minds was not so ready or sympathetic. It was not to be expected that at Kealakekua Bay in February 1779 he should be more subtly master of events, more imaginatively calculating, than he was in Tonga in June 1778. (cliv)

The normal Cook, Beaglehole insists, had an "able mind" and "constantly fine" apprehensions that produced decisions and knowledge that any "reasonable" person in the same situation would recognize as objective. This careful, reasonable man survived within Cook sufficiently for him to pen the third voyage's masterfully controlled journal. When he was not writing, however, according to Beaglehole, a "blunting" caused by fatigue led Cook to leave the realm of reason, to invade lands, cut off ears, administer lashes to people who had never before seen a whip, to burn houses and canoes, to kidnap friendly chiefs, and to murder men trying to protect their beloved chiefs.

Beaglehole's apologia of Cook's rationality invites a thought experiment. Suppose one reverses the roles of the actors in these events. Imagine invaders coming unprovoked to Beaglehole's island, New Zealand. Suppose, with no declaration of war or warning, they burn Beaglehole's house and church, infect his daughters with syphilis, kidnap his father and murder several of Beaglehole's friends. Beaglehole suggests such behavior need not alter our understanding of the invader's "constantly fine" and "able mind" if we understand that this invader is fatigued and under strain. Because Cook was suffering these maladies, Beaglehole advises, even Cook's victims should accept his journal as an honorable and accurate account of Hawaiians and of the other Native peoples he encountered.<sup>29</sup>

## SCIENTIFIC COLONIALISM

Viewing Cook, then, not as he writes himself but as he is written about by his shipmates undermines Cook's claims to be a reliable and rational observer. Similarly, when one looks at European arts and sciences in general, not as they present themselves but as they appear when viewed within a broader context, their related claims to universality also appear to be situated.



It is commonly claimed, for example, that Cook's voyages were intended to add to the body of knowledge about world geography, flora, and fauna. The full title of those sensational 1784 volumes included the explanation that the third voyage was undertaken "for making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere." The first sentence of the "secret instructions" Cook was given shortly before he left England even seem to support this view, as it states it is "his Majesty's pleasure, that an attempt should be made to find a Northern passage by sea from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean."<sup>30</sup> This declaration can be read as suggesting a certain interest in increasing geographical knowledge, though, of course, the commercial and military benefits of such a sea passage were paramount to those funding the voyage. Little in the rest of these secret instructions suggests any interest whatsoever in advancing knowledge, for, once a course and timetable are set, the orders focus almost exclusively on politics. Cook is instructed on how he should deal with "any part of the Spanish dominions" and with "any of the inhabitants or subjects of his Catholic majesty" (ccxxi). He is to keep himself hidden from them, if at all possible, or, if contact is made, to use every means to avoid provoking a war.<sup>31</sup>

Cook's secret orders also direct him to collect "accurate Observations of the nature hereafter mentioned that have not already been made . . . as far as your time will allow" (ccxxii–ccxxiii). The "nature hereafter mentioned" focuses on information that might be useful for future colonies. "You are also, with the consent of the natives, *to take possession*, in the name of the King of Great Britain, of convenient situations in such countries as you may discover . . . but if you find the countries so discovered are uninhabited, you are *to take possession* of them for his majesty, by setting up proper marks and inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors" (ccxxiii, emphasis added).

Cook followed orders: He took possession of several lands by leaving inscriptions on trees, rocks, and in bottles, and by carefully recording in his journal the dates and locations of these symbols. He took discursive possession as well by placing every site in a grid of latitude and longitude that asserted Greenwich, England, as the cardinal center of the earth. Furthermore, Cook took possession by giving English names to hundreds of Native places and dozens of Native peoples. Strikingly, in fact, Cook's meticulously composed journals describe no single activity more often than Cook's proclamation of what, henceforth, the prominent features of the Pacific should be called.<sup>32</sup>

England's need for new possessions seemed especially acute at the time the three commissioners of the admiralty were composing Cook's secret orders. As Cook sailed from England in July of 1776, British warships were also preparing to sail to confront the troublesome terrorists in the American colonies where earlier explorers, too, had practiced both symbolic and violent acts of possession. War with the American colonists and with the French would erupt as Cook completed his assigned tasks.<sup>33</sup> This context suggests why there was so much expense and secrecy in sending Cook out on yet a third voyage. This perspective also

makes more understandable why Douglas in the Cook and King volume would compose for Cook's final journal entry the declaration that the discovery of Hawai'i was "the most important that had hitherto been made by Europeans, throughout the extent of the Pacific Ocean."<sup>34</sup> Douglas makes this claim on Cook's behalf not because of Hawai'i's size, for New Zealand and Australia were known to be larger, nor because of Hawai'i's natural resources, for other places were more amply endowed. Hawai'i's importance was based on its strategic placement as a site for supplying ships on the way to the new Pacific rim colonies England's rulers desired. These new colonies were expected to and indeed did become of paramount importance to imperial England in the nineteenth century after its loss of a large chunk of North America.

Cook was ordered to collect knowledge "as far as your time will allow," but even this part-time occupation was to focus on the acquisition of information that might help establish new colonies and defeat England's Euroamerican enemies. The penultimate paragraph of Cook's orders illustrates rather directly how Cook's work was to aid England's military pursuits: "Upon your arrival in England, you are immediately to repair to this office, in order to lay before us a full account of your proceedings in the whole course of the voyage; taking care, before you leave the sloop, to demand from the officers and petty officers, the log-books and journals they may have kept, and to seal them up for our inspection; and enjoining them, and the whole crew, not to divulge where they have been, until they shall have permission so to do" (ccxxiv). This emphasis on secrecy undermines both the eighteenth- and twentieth-century representations of Cook as a man engaged in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. The writing of the officers and of the petty officers had to be confiscated and all of them enjoined to silence, for the goal of Cook's so-called scientific work was to use it as a means for symbolically and physically taking "possession, in the name of the King of Great Britain, of convenient situations in such countries as you may discover."<sup>35</sup>

### COOK'S MASTER NARRATIVE

Even as Cook fashioned his journal into a careful narrative of Anglo-European superiority, many of Cook's own men mocked this viewpoint. These seamen, and a few of the officers, maintained against Cook's official view that it was not the English but Pacific peoples who possessed a superior life. A few of Cook's men deserted, and many others began to plot desertion, even though such an act likely meant they would never be able to see their own native land or families again.

The danger from desertions became so great at Rataeta, a little over two months before the ships arrived off Kana'i, that when two men deserted ship on November 24, 1777, Cook wrote in his journal, "As these were not the only two persons in the Ships who wanted to end their days at these islands, it was necessary in order to put a stop to further desertion to have them got back at all events"

(247).<sup>36</sup> Cook sent massive, armed parties to search for and arrest the deserters. When these searches failed, Cook himself went with even more men. He also called the officers and crew of both ships together, an important event that, like many others, Cook carefully omits mentioning in his writing. Luckily, Alexander Home, master's mate of the *Discovery*, wrote in his journal at length that "upon the discovery of this spirit of desertion Captain Cook Turned his men up and Made a Long speech on th[at] head. He Made use both of Entreatys and Threats and with a Deal of Art and Eloquence. . . . Amongst Other things he told them they *Might* run off if they pleased. But they might Depend upon it he would Recover them again."<sup>37</sup>

Home's account of Cook's speech continues with mention of several of the specific threats Cook made. Home ends with a summary of Cook's final words: "They *Might* fly," Cook told the men, "if they please to Omiah King Otou or to the Most distant Country known to these people. His authority would bring them back and Dead or Alive he'd have them" (cxiii). Home concludes, "Every man was Convinced and how so ever great Our inclination *Might* be to taste of these Joys and Bliss that seemed More than Mortal all hopes was now given over" (cxiv).

History in the Anglo-American tradition is still written mostly by scholars who identify with Cook and the educated and propertied classes who funded him. So, for example, such historians analyze Cook's death endlessly, yet rarely mention the fact that four marines died beside their Captain that same morning at Kealakekua. These writers, and most of their readers, naturalize the class inequities upon which Anglo-European explorations depended. Cook's crew, however, like the majority in England and Europe in that time, had little reason to identify with the narrative of Western superiority offered by their Captain and his titled sponsors. Hunger, poverty, conscription, and threats of imprisonment—not hopes for wealth and titles—forced most of Cook's crew to endure his long and dangerous voyages. These men had little reason to suspect they would ever experience much "Joy and Bliss" in their homeland. Thus it was not by appealing to his crew's sense of English superiority but rather through repeated lashings and threats of death that Cook kept his crew from mass desertions.

Though Cook knew better than to try to share his narrative of English magnificence with his own crew, he nonetheless offered it (as best he could, with limited language skills) to try to convince Pacific Islanders to submit. Cook's recurring accounts of his usually futile attempts to impress Pacific Islanders make much of his journal read today like a Shandian farce, though it is clear Cook himself little experienced the humor.

For example, Cook—at considerable expense and bother—stuffed a bulky, ravenous, and odorous menagerie of animals onto his two ships. This collection included mares and stallions, heifers and bulls, sheep, goats, rabbits, and poultry, "all of them," in Cook's words, "intended for New Zealand, Otaetie and the neighbouring islands, or any other place we might meet, where there was a prospect that the leaving of some of them might prove usefull to posterity."<sup>38</sup> The

"posterity" Cook had in mind was mostly that resulting from his fellow countrymen who would later come on English war and merchant ships and would need food supplies. He knew that the Pacific Islanders themselves already had plenty of their own foods to eat. It was for future countrymen that for over a year Cook forced his unhappy crew of one hundred and eighty to share a tiny living space with large and small animals. At each landfall these same men were required to row the stock ashore and back again, so the animals could forage.

Cook expected the Natives to be awed by his four-legged presents, for they were the centerpiece of his effort to convince Pacific Islanders of the preeminence of Europeans. Many animals died, however, before they could be given away, and many others, once given, were promptly eaten by those Pacific Islanders who received them. As a symbol of his largess and superiority, Cook's troublesome menagerie proved nearly useless. Cook's journals several times lament that though the islanders liked iron and other Anglo-European trinkets, they valued anything red—and red feathers even more. Cook acknowledges he gained some credit among various islanders for acting as an interisland ferry for feathers, but he was displeased to be associated with a narrative that assigned him value principally as a middleman in trade for an item with no intrinsic connection to Anglo-Europeans.

Just as Anglo-European products and animals seldom buttressed the story Cook offered Natives about his supposed superiority, so, too, did Anglo customs and arts generally make a disappointing impact as well. About Tahiti, for example, Cook complains, "Europeans have visited them at times for these ten years past, yet we find neither new arts nor improvement in the old, nor have they copied after us in any one thing" (241).

Cook sometimes tried to support his narrative of Anglo-European supremacy by firing off guns, but even this noise seldom impressed. He and his men were quick to murder Natives, too, as we have remarked, but, again, the results were disappointing. Pacific Islanders seemed to have believed that they already possessed an adequate array of methods for ending lives, so Cook's way of murdering did not strike them as a particularly consequential innovation.

Cook's successes at impressing the Natives are so few that his journal exults when they do occur. He reports excitedly that the Natives in Tahiti had a "Very great surprise and astonishment" to see him ride a horse: "It was afterwards continued every day by one or another so long as we stayed and yet their curiosity was not then satisfied, they were exceedingly delighted with these Animals after they had seen the use that was made of them and I think they gave them a better idea of the greatness of other Nations than all the other things put together that had been carried amongst them" (209). So great was Cook's pleasure that he writes here with no awareness of the absurdity of his equating his supposed superiority—"the greatness of other Nations"—to the display of sailors riding a few, half-starved horses.

One of Cook's favorite demonstrations of Euroamerican magnificence depended upon displays of a Chinese art. As he writes of some "sky and Water Rockets" set



off in Tonga, Natives were “astonished and pleased . . . beyond measure and [the fireworks] intively turned the scale in our favour” (110). Unfortunately for Cook, by the time he was blown to Hawai‘i, he had used up most of his pyrotechnical supplies and could only set off a single weak aerial display, to little effect.<sup>39</sup>

Then as now, Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders resisted the foreign narrative Cook inaugurated, the narrative that places Natives in a chain of being closer to dumb beasts than to the Euroamerican, educated classes that Cook and his successors thought they represented. The more the Natives would resist, however, the more Cook would insist. And so, on February 14, 1779, Cook marched forth once again to try to enact his narrative of superiority. Some Hawaiians that day silenced Cook’s imperious demands with lethal blows and dismemberment.

Cook’s death, of course, did not silence his master narrative of European superiority or the explorer’s rhetoric of possession of which it was a part. These have been elaborated in various media for two hundred years, so that now Euroamerican representations of Hawai‘i are annually disseminated to billions of people worldwide. Resistance to this imperious worldview has persisted, however, among some Euroamerican inheritors of the tradition of Cook’s misinformed men. As later chapters will detail, resistance persists in the islands as well, more prominently and poignantly among the descendants of those people who yanked Cook’s heart from his chest.

## Chapter Three

# The Kama‘āina Anti-Conquest

From a distant camp came a snatch of Hawaiian music, the outpourings of the sad, confused hearts of a destroyed people. Breathlessly, terrifyingly, it swept Hamilton and Patricia together.

Armine Von Tempski<sup>1</sup>

During the decades following the death of Cook, numerous explorers from many Euroamerican nations arrived in the islands, probably drawn almost as much by the notoriety of Cook’s murder as by the strategic placement of the islands near the center of the world’s largest ocean. Most of these explorers followed Cook’s example in composing their logs and journals, and many of these documents later formed the bases for books that further disseminated the self-aggrandizing rhetoric so effectively employed by Cook. In 1820, however, fourteen extremist, New England missionaries settled in the islands to begin the promulgation of a substantially different rhetoric. The islands these uninvited zealots invaded were claimed to be important not for their strategic location but rather because they were home to many thousands of purported heathen in need of a “salvation” the missionaries proclaimed they were uniquely equipped to provide.

The missionaries introduced a rhetoric of revulsion, and this rhetoric struggled for dominance in the islands for many decades against alternative rhetorics produced by explorers, sea captains, merchants, and, of course, Kanaka Maoli themselves. The missionary rhetoric of revulsion labeled even the simplest of Native acts as “depraved.”<sup>2</sup> The worse this rhetoric could make Hawaiians seem, the more the missionaries could present themselves as courageous, righteous, and worthy of the continued remittances they required be sent for their support from home. Remarkably, only a few generations after the missionaries arrived, their own descendants led a movement to replace the rhetoric of revulsion with a rhetoric that emphasized the need to preserve many of the same cultural practices the missionaries had so doggedly opposed. This latter rhetoric, what I call here the rhetoric of the *kama‘āina* anti-conquest, is the focus of most of this chapter. We